4. ART IN YOUTH EXPERIENCE

STUDENT EXHIBITS

To illustrate student achievement we will focus on four youngsters, trying to give a brief but holistic portrayal of their education in the arts.[23] It is obvious that few important sophistications can be attributed to any single lesson, but the influence of concept-oriented teaching and even Broudy ideas became apparent. It is also easier here to see that teaching competence requires adaptation to experiences and opportunities outside school.

To standardize the "exhibits" a little we asked each of four students to examine four works: first to compare *Acrobat on a Ball* by Pablo Picasso with *A Clown* by Honore Daumier; and to respond to *Positon* by Victor Vasarely, and to *Thorn Heads* by Graham Sutherland. At our request, under test conditions, each of the four children wrote an essay describing and judging Marc Chagall's *I and the Village*. We also obtained samples of the children's artwork.

Adrian is a "neighborhood kid." His mother, Jenny, has changed our appointment a couple of times. She welcomes us warmly. Adrian is a little late. The frame home is modest, carefully decorated. Jenny has recently covered the soft rounded furniture with dark chintz, patterned with flowing orchids. A similar patterning of leaves can be found in the large Alexander palm growing nearby, and in the tropical wallpaper. On the television set, stereo, and occasional table are wooden figurines and busts, all in African motif. Two striking original paintings have been hung, honoring artist friends.

Adrian attended Washington School before Columbia. Jenny liked both schools, not so much because of the content of either program, but because Adrian "likes his teachers, and this year more than ever. He seems to be growing up." Adrian "brought lots of art home from Washington School." Usually it was displayed in the kitchen, sometimes on the refrigerator door. Jenny gives a sweeping gesture to indicate pride in her interior decorating and to explain the absence of Adrian's work in the living room. He draws a little at home but does not have special materials. However, she is optimistic about Adrian's interest in the visual arts, and despite his saying "every second day" that he would like to be a lawyer, she seems just as enthusiastic about the possibility of his having a career in the arts.

Adrian arrives home. His entrance suggests it has been a long day. He seems intrigued and slightly embarrassed that Diane has rung three times. We move into the dining room to show Adrian *Acrobat on a Ball* and *A Clown*.

Immediately Adrian's studio experience is evident. "The texture is different." He refers to the Daumier and explains:

> It looks like he has used a crayon. He has taken the wrapping off it and (demonstrating the horizontal application of the crayon to achieve texture). He probably drew it first, then painted it, and then drew the scribbles. It was drawn in chalk, no, charcoal. Over here (the "torn" edge) it looks like he painted over some paper stuck on with something that peels off easily and then peeled it off to make the shape.

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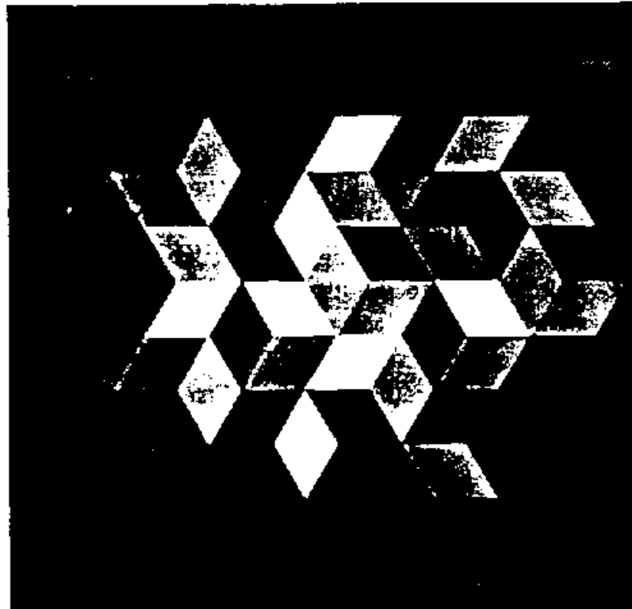
[23]These four had completed seventh grade at Columbia. To select them we listened to several nominations by teachers, urging that they tell us about "ordinary kids" as well as "stars." We did not pick the very best but still got three of four well above average. Our purpose was not to represent typical HEART achievement but to indicate what was easily possible for many youngsters to attain. We wanted also to show the conceptual nature of this achievement. Time constraints prevented us from including Decatur students.

Picasso, *Acrobat on a Ball*, 1905. Oil on canvas. Pushkin Museum, Moscow. Photo courtesy of V.A.G.A., New York/P.A.D.E.M., Paris, 1984.

Honore Daumier, *A Clown*, 1927. Charcoal on water color, 14 3/8 x 10 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, Rogers Fund.



Victor Vasarely, *Positron*, 1966. Oil on board, Galerie Denise Rene, Paris. Photo courtesy of Victor Vasarely.

Graham Sutherland, *Thorn Heads*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

Adrian's emphasis on technique is not continued with the Picasso. Here too Adrian first avoids the main figures. "This looks like a tornado (in the background), the way it's shaped like a mushroom." A direct question about technique is ignored. "They look like they are doing exercises or some kind of movement in dramatic arts."

To another question about Picasso's technique: "This was probably done in charcoal too. If it was paint you could still see the lines (brushstrokes) in it, even if he had tried not to have them there." He examines the detail of the man's leotard, noting its similarity to the girl's. He now says that parts of the work, at least, could have been painted.

He returns to the use of line in the Daumier, picking up the rhythm with his finger as he traces. "He has different shapes of line here: all lumpy here, squiggly here like a rope, others just go straight across." Adrian is uncertain why the artist has done the work in this way. A couple of first impressions confuse him. The figure standing on the chair prompts the question—"Is this an Indian?" The scene "looks like a cave," a recognition of the absence of background.

Comparing the acrobat in the Picasso with the clown on the chair in the Daumier shows Adrian's readiness to analyze movement. Gesturing with his own body, Adrian says the clown is "moving back like this, because the lines, his chest is curved, making it look like he is leaning back." When he tries it himself, he seems to realize that it is hard to move in that position. He contradicts himself (and the feeling of the work) by saying, "He looks like he is frozen in one spot." Adrian notes the absence of hands on the clown figure, saying, "Maybe he wanted to make a 'freak out' picture." Adrian shows no disrespect for the work in using the term. Next a digression to his Saturday morning art class. He gives a very detailed explanation of one of the Krannert Art Museum's oils to illustrate the use of shadow and reflection. "It was very real . . . it was real nice."

Adrian struggles a little with "mood." The Daumier is "not actually scary but it does not look so much of a pleasant mood." Perhaps he does pick up the nervous excitement but cannot articulate it. He reads the mood of the Picasso in terms of the moods of the characters. The man in the foreground is happy "because he's watching her. She is smiling." The background figures "look like they are enjoying themselves with the little dog and the horse eating the grass."

A question inviting Adrian to say how line, shape, and color might have been used to convey mood draws talk about how the artist has created the lightness of the girl's leotards, "by erasing the already applied paint." As with most of the students of this age interested in art, the inferential leap from technique to expression seems very difficult.

"What kind of a girl is this?" "She doesn't look like she's from America." "What is her occupation?" "She's a dancer." "What makes you think she is a dancer?" "She has this little thing on (a leotard) and it looks like she is warming up. This is her instructor." "Is there anything about her appearance that suggests she is a dancer?" "The way she is standing and the way her body is shaped, not shaped but the way it is smooth (tracing the line of the figure)." Adrian gestures grace in a turn sideways.

"What about this guy? Is he a dancer?" "Maybe he's a football player but he could be a dancer." "Why?" "He looks big and muscley." "How has the artist made him look so big?" "I'm not sure."

Adrian prefers the Picasso to the Daumier although "it could stand a few more people in the background." The Daumier "looks kind of sloppy like he rushed through it," whereas with the Picasso "it looks like he took his good time and did the lines real careful, and made it real, real enough." The latter comment suggests his preference is for realism rather than literalism,

possibly to favor carefully executed work. Adrian thinks that someone who could do a "sketch" like Daumier has a "lot of talent" and could do works like the Picasso—but would "not make too much money" from sketches.

Adrian begins his response to *Positon* by explaining that it looks like steps, tracing these with his fingers. "How does it look like steps when it is flat?" He points to the surfaces that appear to progress and others that retreat, and describes them as a repeating pattern. Further probes suggest that "depth" and "optical illusion" are words not accessible to him in this situation at least. The interviewer has some doubt whether he even detects the optical illusion.

Adrian is more at home again as we begin to talk about making such a work. He recognizes the repetition of color, and that there are several different paths through the work. He is most impressed by the exactness of the boundaries between colors. He identifies harmonious colors and the use of complements in the work.

The role of color and shade in creating the three-dimensional effect eludes him for a while, but suddenly he gets it: "It is the dark ones that go back."

And then, *The Thorn Heads*. "Oh, Man! What is it? It looks like elephant tusks and maybe a flagpole here (indicating both)." "What makes them look like flagpoles?" "The circle at the top. And it starts off fat and gets skinny." "What is he trying to do by that?" "I don't know."

"What is he trying to make the whole thing look like?" "Outer space, wacky space ships or something. This here (indicating crescent) could be a moon. This could be a pterodactyl (top left of the figure) and this does look like a tusk. This could be some kind of weapon (spikes)." "What makes it look like a weapon?" "The spikes. It could be a power weapon and shoot lasers. Over here this looks like a shower of colors (the 'plume')." "How does it resemble a shower?" "The way it is curved. He stops them at different spots too, some are longer, some shorter."

"Is this a big 'thing'?" "It looks big. The poles make it look big and so does the size he made." "What about the background?" "Well, the color is different. To make it look like nighttime or that it is on a planet. And the moon is close and shining or the sun is shining against it. This could be a woodpecker."

"Have pattern or repetition been used?" "It wasn't slopped on. Everything is careful, like the straight lines." "Are all the lines straight?" "Some are straight and some are curved. At the ends they are pointed." "Does this give the work a particular mood?" "It doesn't give it any mood."

"Why has he outlined the shapes like that?" "I don't know, to make it different maybe." "Does the outlining help it to look like a weapon?" "Yes, a bow and arrow, it is curved like that and the ends are tied. This looks like it could dig in, with the point like that."

"Is it a peaceful work?" "No, it's rowdy." "How has the artist given you that sense?" "The way he hasn't put it all in one spot. Some is off to the side, some is down below."

As is apparent Adrian was an acute observer and literate critic (even though sometimes wrong and often incomplete). It would be simpler for us educators if we could say which of Adrian's sophistications were attributable to Columbia School, which to Washington School, which to Saturday School, and what must have come from out of school—but of course we cannot. And our inquiries would probably contribute more to good teaching if we emphasized simple causality less and quality of learning contexts more.[24] Here with Adrian we see what we can accomplish and many things still to be done.

[24]Leslie D. McLean, "Judging the Quality of a School as a Place Where the Arts Might Thrive," in Robert E. Stake (ed.), *Evaluating the Arts in Education: A Responsive Approach*, Charles E. Merrill Co., now available only through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975.

Marc Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 6 feet 3 5/8 inches x 59 5/8 inches. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim fund.

Adrian wrote the following essay on *I and the Village*:[25]

It looks like two people were having a conversation. They're thinking about what will happen in their future life. The man is a Christian perhaps. And the woman could be one too. They could be rich.

I think it's real interesting, because it had a lot of color to it. And it shows the feeling of what the man could be thinking about. And with the tree it gives a special feeling.

Adrian brings us some of his Saturday morning art class products. He explains what he has been trying to do. In particular, he is very proud of the way he has drawn one of the suns. "I really made it shine." And he had.[26]

[25]We asked several classes at two Decatur schools to write such essays. Only with Project HEART teachers did we get highly analytic, nonjudgmental responses.

[26]After addressing the great differences between works of master artists and those of schoolchildren, Howard Gardner noted certain similarities: "the common pleasure, the compulsive satisfaction, the willingness to disregard what others are doing, the pursuit of one's own ideas to their graphic conclusion." (*Artful Scribbles*, Basic Books, New York, 1980, p. 268.)

"Outer space" and "dragons," both avid interests, are revealed in Adrian's oil pastel drawing. Photo by M. Munski.

With her parents and her sister Ann, a sophomore in high school, **Karen Walsh** lives in a new housing development just beyond the outskirts of town. The house has been paneled with rough-sawn timber; the interior has a warm brown glow.

The walls are decorated with antique carpenters' tools and old sepia family photographs. Karen's father is a vocational arts teacher in a local high school. He built the house himself. Mrs. Walsh has a continuing interest in oils and watercolors (having taken several courses), is a member of an art club, and does some photography, embroidery, and sewing. Karen's sister, Ann, is both interested and talented in the visual arts. Both parents are annoyed that they will have to seek private tuition to help Ann develop further because she has exhausted the offerings at the high schools she attends.

Karen is a friendly outgoing child who meets us at the door. She smiles a lot, brushes aside fair hair and is keen to talk about the works of art we have brought. We begin with the comparison of Picasso's *Acrobat on a Ball* and Daumier's *A Clown*. Straightaway Karen notices the rectangular form of the foreground figure in the Picasso: "It's interesting . . . it's round and still looks square."

Referring to an earlier general question about the kinds of things she looks for in examining a work she says that the Picasso appears balanced, making the connection between the squareness and bulk of the figure and its relation to balance, recognizing that it is offset by the several smaller figures on the other side of the work.

"It is hard to tell what it is" is her first remark about the Daumier, but she is unfazed and identifies the drummer. As with other children we have interviewed, the clown remains a puzzle for her. "I've never seen anything like that!" She is attracted and amused by the gesture drawing. She seems to know that interpretation can take time.

Returning to the Picasso she thinks the foreground figure is watching over the "dancer" (the girl on the ball, understandable given the grace of the figure). He seems as if he is "bossing the dancer around"; he looks big and strong . . . and stern, "because they show his muscles." The dancer is "trying to impress him."

In response to a question about the use of color in the Picasso, Karen says with uncertainty that it is "grey and the pinks stand out and make it strong." She may be referring again to the girl but her gesture is more general at this point. When asked about the mood of the Picasso she responded first in terms of the girl "being watched and having to do things she does not want to do." Her more complete understanding is shown only later in the discussion about the materials the artist has used. Then she is able to say the work is "gloomy." This leads to the observation that the light blue in the Daumier makes her feel free and that the Picasso's grey-blue and deep blue make her feel sad. She seems not pressed to reveal how these qualities are seen *in* the work, but she says, "the way the dark colors blend in here suggests a certain mood."

The "scribbles" in the Daumier suggest that the figures "are moving however they want, they seem like they're really free." Karen's hand gestures are perhaps more indicative of her understanding than are her words. She is able to describe correctly the texture of each work, but mistakes the water color of the Daumier for "tempera, maybe." Her uncertainty may relate to the tempera she has used in class, perhaps diluted. The charcoal lines are easily identified by her, and their function in the work is made clear. The use of line in the Picasso presents a problem for her. She can trace the flow with gestures but cannot describe the way line is used, perhaps because it relates so closely to form, which has already been competently handled.

Karen likes Vasarely's *Positon* and immediately talks about the striking diagonal swath of color contrasted to the dark periphery. She says:

> It's not real, it is imaginary. I've never seen boxes or cubes with colors like that. It shows a maze. They (the cubes) make it look like it goes in and out, showing depth. It changes too. Just by looking at it you can make it feel like this part is coming out (indicating) or that this part is going in.

Karen gestures and says that it is both the tone and color of the planes that make a cube "stand out."

"Could Karen do one of these herself?" "Probably not," she says laughing. "It looks hard."[27] "What if we were to tile the entire bathroom like this?" "It would be interesting. Every time you went to the bathroom something different would be popping out. It would be freaky!"

Karen goes on to point out the repetition of color, and color pairings through the work. She uses the term "pattern," and recognizes that perceptual fluctuations the work induces require time to understand, and that the pattern is somewhat irregular (and variable). She alludes to the likelihood that the artist worked through trial sketches before attempting the work. It is not her first experience with optical illusions in art. They have studied a similar work in class. She doubts it was by the same artist, "It was more real."

Karen enjoys *Thorn Heads*, "having no idea what it is. It could be an animal, not a real one, but these (indicating) are a bit like a head and eyes." "A snuggling animal?" "No, it is mean . . . and looks like it is hand-made for a fight."

"Is there anything about the artist's use of color, line, or shape that gives that kind of feeling?" "He has used lots of jagged lines, and points like these here and here (indicating), and red, black, and blue." "Is there anything associated with those hues?" "If they are light it would be happy; but if dark it is fierce." "What was the artist's thinking about the background?" "The dark blue makes these points stand out more and it seems more scary. If it were yellow or pink it would not be the same."

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[27]"Raising children's expectations of themselves" is seen to be the key to achieving these aims, which HEART associate Kay Hall regards as prior to longer term improvements in production quality. Hall regards three outcomes as important: visual perception, vocabulary, and diminished feeling of mystification in the presence of a work.

"Why would an artist paint something like this?" "Maybe he is creative (laughing)." "Is he?" "He uses lots of different patterns like here (gesturing to different movements and repetitions in the work). And he uses dots and uses strange forms. It is probably not meant to *be* something real. I would not know what it was. It is different."

"Is this a modern conception of weaponry?" "It could be modern with those spikes, but this looks like it is made of bone. See these markings? This (the 'plumage') looks like it is being thrown out." (Other children have compared it to a rocket exhaust.) "Does this remind you of an animal?" "Yes, it looks like an old crow here, and this looks like a bird sticking its tongue out."

"How much of this did you learn in school?" "I learned a lot about color, pattern, and things like balance and standing out." Karen qualifies this a little indicating that she knew about color and pattern before. Her art teachers have been Mr. Ecker (last year) and Mrs. Cutler, an elementary art specialist in Champaign. This year, she has Mrs. Olsen (whom she had last year also) and Mrs. Payne. The critique of art she learned almost exclusively from Michele Olsen. Karen regards "making and liking" art as equally important.

Karen wrote the following about *I and the Village*.

> This slide reminds me of a horse and a man remembering things they have done together. It seems like they are good friends because they are looking at each other and smiling. This slide has a repeating pattern with curved lines. It is used many times throughout the picture. It is balanced in the sense that there is an animal on one side and a human on the other side. There are more tiny things on the animal's side but the dark red on the other side balances it off. The slide seems to show a part of what life is all about because it shows some of the things that people are doing.
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> It seems to set a mood. What I mean is, it can give me a happy feeling or a sad feeling. It can give me a happy feeling because I think about life and how important it is for this animal and person. It makes me sad because it's kind of a grayish color like something is wrong.

Earth tones emanate beneath the clear glaze of Karen's hand-built pot. Photo by M. Munski.

Amy Roberts attends Columbia School because she lived in its catchment area. It is "the computers and then the foreign languages" that her mother regards as the school's special features. "The arts program is not so important. In fact, I do not think much about it because I do not know much about it." Amy indicates that she has not had classes with Michele Olsen, Larry Ecker, or Sharon Cox. Her art classes at Dr. Howard Elementary School were taught by her classroom teacher and sometimes by Jody Payne, then one of three itinerant art specialists.

Mrs. Roberts is uneasy about our questions, perhaps feeling obliged to say more than she can. She indicates she has had no training in the arts, and visits galleries and art museums only occasionally, "for the children." She took them also to see *The Wiz* and one or two other musicals. She enjoys all kinds of music, but prefers religious and rock music. Her favorite performers are Gladys Knight and Johnny Mathis.

Mrs. Roberts says she likes to display Amy's art work, though none is in view in the apartment. "There is some on the walls in the other house," she says quietly with a hint of tears confirming tension shown since we arrived. A recent separation from her husband is the reason for newness of apartment furnishings and "motel art" on the walls. It is perhaps a refuge, not a home yet.[28]

Amy is dealing with the situation with no outward sign of concern. She chats happily about the reproductions *Acrobat on a Ball* and *A Clown*. When asked if she had a "checklist" of ideas about what to look for in works of art, Amy says "No." She identifies the figures and what they appear to be doing: "sitting down," "standing with arms up in the air."

Amy is unable to suggest why the works might have been done as they were and is uncertain about the media used beyond saying that the Daumier was done with chalk and the Picasso with paint. She says nothing about the feeling or mood. Both could be found in a museum "because they're nice art." Amy's preference is for the Picasso. When asked why she says, "I don't know, I just do."

Amy has seen something like Vasarely's *Positon* before at school but cannot remember the colors. "Are the colors (in this one) bright or dull?" "They're bright, the orange and the yellow." "Why would an artist do something like this; was he trying to convey a particular idea?" "No, I don't think so."

"Does it look flat?" "No" (laughing). "Why?" "Because the shapes of the squares look like they're set out." "How has the artist made it so it does not look flat?" "The shapes of the squares." "Anything else?" "The colors." "How has he done that?" "By arranging the colors in different places around the picture." "What happens when he does that?" "I don't know" (after a long pause).

Amy is aware of the optical illusion and the appearance that some "steps" are bigger than others, but has no explanation. Her knowledge of the use of color for contrast or complement seems very limited. She does not recognize the term "texture" and incorrectly guesses that the surface of the original work would be "rough."

"To me it (*The Thorn Heads*) looks like something you might fight with." "Why do you say that?" (No answer.) "What about these?" (indicating the starlike shapes). "Well, those look real sharp." "Has the artist done anything else to make things look sharp?" "The shape of these" (the stars).

Amy is unable to identify any other features to support her initial claim about the object being something to fight with.

[28]Though our acuities may be just as limited elsewhere, we are especially aware here of our lack of understanding of Mrs. Roberts' plight, and perhaps of Amy's comprehensions.

She likes the work and suggests that it is something that might be found in Africa "because of the way it looks and the feathers." This response is to a question about whether the work is about something real or imaginary.

During the interview Amy appears to "catch on" a little about what the interviewer considers relevant. However, the absence of both conceptual and studio training is clear, particularly in responses to questions about how techniques have been used and the artist's purpose. The work she is keen to show us confirms this impression.

Qualities of folk art are evoked by Amy's papier-mâché figure or doll with a fabric shawl and babushka. Photo by M. Munski.

Amy's Essay on *I and the Village*:

In this picture I see a lot of pretty colors. The colors are very colorful and bright. There are pinks, greens, yellows, whites, blues, reds, etc. I like this painting. I think it's really pretty, especially the colors.

I think this picture is good because its colors are pretty and bright. I like pictures with bright colors rather than the pictures with the dull look. Color makes a picture look a lot better.

Michael and his father are seated casually on the couch. An iridescent Hundertwasser hangs over the fireplace. Exquisite framed watercolors are displayed above a Victorian couch. In the living room, Scandinavian furniture is illuminated by Tiffany lamps. Michael's father expresses a strong interest in arts education. He says he has provided his children with many opportunities to develop "strong arts appreciation" through travel, music lessons, performances at the ballet and theater. His own influence as a father-architect is mentioned by Michael's mother. His older sister, in high school, has taken art courses and regularly visits museums. Her dissatisfaction with other middle schools influenced Michael's choice to attend Columbia.

"The only reason Michael's at Uni High now," his father adds, "is that our fellow-voters didn't vote the money we needed this year to keep some of the more challenging teachers at Columbia."

Michael is invited to discuss art prints. He sits cross-legged on the rug. Michael recognizes *Acrobat on a Ball*. "Mrs. Olsen showed us that." He prefers "eye catching colors" in works of art and points out the subdued blue and rose color scheme of the Picasso and the general lack of vivid color in Daumier's *A Clown*.

Michael seems mystified by the subject matter of Daumier's work. He accurately identifies the use of crayon and watercolors, pointing out how the wash "just runs down." The use of the crayon on top of the watercolor seems "weird" to him. (At this level media tend to be taught individually, and the use of mixed media as in this sketch by Daumier is likely not to have been introduced.)

He notices several uses of balance. He discusses entire compositions, for instance, the use of a more imposing figure against the acrobat and people in the background. Michael also contrasts the nuances of balance of the two compositions despite a seemingly similar positioning in each of the left figures. "She looks like she's trying drastically to keep her balance," he says pointing to the slipping foot of the acrobat. "She knows she's falling and she's trying to flap her arms to get back up." He traces the contour to illustrate how "her side is just giving way."

Michael quickly notes how *Positon* changes and quips that it reminds him of a favorite video game. Although he immediately points out how the colors change from dark to light to darker again, following the diagonal of the composition, he does not relate this use of color to the phenomenon of the optical illusion.

Michael views *The Thorn Heads*. "This looks like an elephant in a weird shape, because it's grey," Michael begins, "and it looks like tusks and a trunk," as he indicates some curved forms. "It's as if the artist is making his *own* animal with different shapes of different things."

What catches Michael's eye is the sharpness of the spearlike shapes and repeated points. Michael considers the pointed cones and thin, curved tubes to be the main shapes. He seems aware of the character of *The Thorn Heads* by elaborating, "If this were on a playground I wouldn't want to play on it. It would be too sharp and dangerous." Dwelling on expressiveness, he explains: "If an artist is in a 'hyper' mood he or she might do a man jumping up and down or if in a sad mood, something sad and blue. Artists do it by how they feel. That's how they do most paintings." Michael resists the idea that an artist paints a work expressive of mood independently of his or her own mood.

Michael feels he learned the most about looking at art prints in Mrs. Olsen's aesthetic education class.[29]

Michael's essay on *I and the Village*:

> The picture has a lot of detail of different things and a lot of mixed up colors. It is sort of in a way obscene. The picture is well balanced on both sides because of the two big figures or heads. It seems to show what each animal is used for in little pictures on the rest of the paper. The man seems to be feeding the horse or animal with a special plant. The picture is divided into sections on the paper with different moods and drawings.
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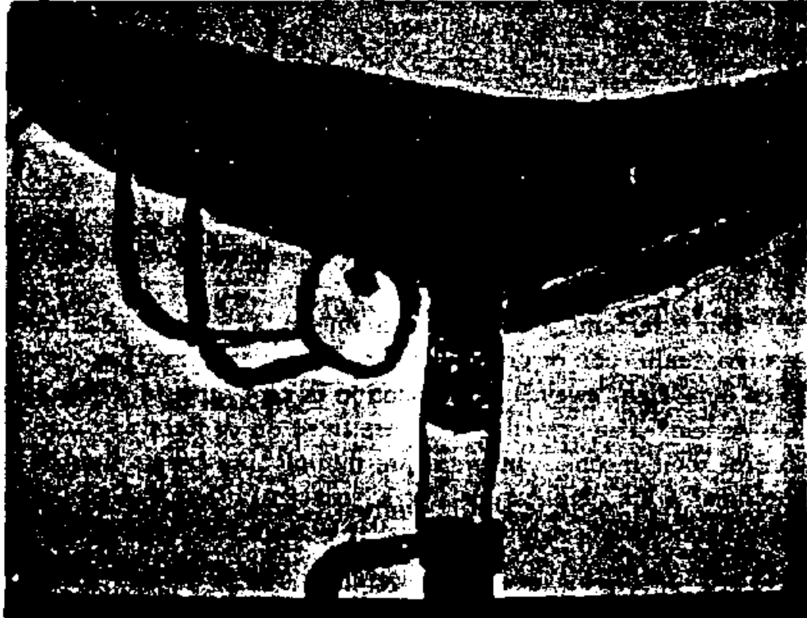
> It seems to be showing the relationship between man and animals which I think is nice. But some parts of the picture and some of the colors make no sense and cause the picture to be in a mood that is unknown. Plus the colors skip too drastically from bright to dark.

[29]Project HEART evaluation has in part relied upon a locally made *Aesthetic Concepts Inventory*. Its multiple choice items covering simultaneously shown works of art require recognition of the dimensions used in perceptual scanning. Its use has at least as important an instructive value as an evaluative one, and helps prepare youngsters for such questions as we asked.



Michael drew this oil pastel still life of a bicycle seat for an assignment in Larry Ecker's art class at Columbia. Photo by M. Munski.

Michael did not inquire about the titles of any of the works. Nor had the other youngsters. Project HEART teachers did not ignore titles but treated them as identifiers, not part of the artist's expressiveness.

SUMMARY

Every child of course is influenced by parents, siblings, friends, and community—so few of the foregoing responses can be attributed directly to school art instruction. Still it is difficult not to conclude that three of these youngsters have been strongly influenced by teachers following the ideas Harry Broudy has espoused.

Karen, Adrian, and Michael were able to examine previously unseen works of art and make cogent statements about their sensory, formal, technical, and even, on occasion, expressive properties. Noting the differences between these three and the fourth child is less than proof, but the differences in quality of out-of-school experience and educational opportunity is persuasive. For three children here, although a historical perspective was missing, the skills of criticism were prominent and the capacity for imaging was growing.

5. MAJOR ISSUES

The development of art instruction in Project HEART and Columbia School is marked by vigor and enthusiasm. It is something of a mutual admiration society, with easy entry for new members. Administrators speak of it with pride, teachers with a sense of entrepreneurship, and students mingle in order to have more contact with these teachers. Close by, it has the look of a successful innovation program.

But it remains a small undertaking in both Champaign and Decatur. The restoration and reconceptualization of program are well regarded, but they are not seen as something that "has to be done right away." Art education is kept alive to a large degree by forces outside the formal system. The School Boards are fixed on containing costs. The Districts of course do not control their income. Incomes are diminishing because public moneys are needed elsewhere, enrollments are diminishing—for a variety of other reasons. Widespread malaise lies just outside present enthusiasm. The smaller silver scene has a cloudy lining.

DIFFERENCES IN PURPOSE

As with any alliance, those working together for art education in Decatur and Champaign have separate purposes as well as a common purpose. They share a belief that more emphasis should be given to art and that there are many potential benefits. Most are strong backers of their district administrators. Most are child-oriented and general-education-oriented. All see in the arts an intellectual discipline, not primarily an opportunity for youngsters to express and enjoy.

But there are six recognizable thrusts, not incompatible, yet each voracious consumers of time and attention, and often not well served by time devoted to the others. In the minds of these teachers the purposes of art education are to develop a youngsters' (1) cultural knowledge base, (2) imaging and other critical thinking skills, (3) artistic expressiveness, (4) self-understanding, (5) membership in and support for the world of art, and (6) opportunities for enjoyment and change of pace.

These six purposes abide within almost every teacher's efforts, but it is common for one or two to be banners and the others mere threads. Time spent on one purpose may or may not further another. The teachers are aware of course that they do not completely agree but generally believe that to strive for greater agreement might put all the objectives (or at least theirs) at risk. Even though it is apparent that the teachers who get involved with Project HEART change their conceptualizations and priorities, there is essentially no apparent desire to fix districtwide priorities.

Although these teachers occasionally hear of Harry Broudy or see projections of his words, few regard themselves as *his* following. They are tuned in to teacher facilitators such as Nancy Roucher or Michele Olsen, and use materials and activity plans provided by them.

From workshops and experience, these teachers are aware that perceptual scanning is effectively taught with polar pairs. Seldom did we see any lessons (for teachers or learners) for image interpretation or development of aesthetic expression—partly because Broudy does not

urge it.[30] These ultimate goals press little upon consciousness; the task for the moment is to develop a small array of *conceptual skills* and to attain the "cherishing" of the arts thus made possible.

These teachers are aware that Project HEART and Columbia School, and perhaps their Districts as a whole, have been identified by the Getty Trust and are being watched. A few of them have read bits about the interest the Getty people have in restoring or vitalizing art education all across the country. Almost none of them has given thought to the Getty call for curricular parity among art history, art criticism, and studio production. To them, this would be a fine-tuning adjustment. For the present the problem seems to be to get any return at all out of the system.

History is thought to be a special subject, rather than a point of view about all subjects, certainly not an essential component in all teaching. Yes, it may be useful, especially to stir interest, to tell a story that has historical reference; but an emphasis on history in teaching art (as well as other subjects) is infrequent. This is true even of most exemplary teachers.

When history does appear in the lesson it usually pertains to the history of a work or the life of the artist. Less often is one pointed to the history of the art—its periods, its schools, its fashions, its concepts, its paradigm shifts—or to relationships between art and social, scientific, or other histories. It would be unusual for a teacher to try to illustrate the problem of an artist—e.g., Monet—struggling to come up with a new medium or technique for an expressive quality he wanted. That very special interaction between critical judgment and personal expression is an essential relationship in education, one possibly best taught through art education. But it seems too complicated for trainers of teachers everywhere to figure out. Not surprisingly, it appears to remain beyond the scope of teaching in Champaign and Decatur. In the magnet schools the separation of aesthetic education from studio production has had the effect of protecting criticism from being overwhelmed by the vitality of production, but also of isolating them, one from the other.

A similar obscurity hides much of the interplay among history, criticism, and the production of art. Yet in certain classrooms, there are ways in which parity among the three is greatly improved. The teaching in these rooms reflects a developmental approach to artistic sensitivity, as well as to artistic production. Occasionally there is robust attention to local history (of these communities), almost contemporary history, which shows up especially in Gary Olsen's sessions on architecture, but is to be found elsewhere as well.

Criticism appears not in the guise of connoisseurship,[31] but more as analysis, or rather as preparation for analysis. Of course, not all criticism and critics are analytic, but identification of characteristics by the teacher or student is considered to be a first step in understanding and communication. Holistic or metaphoric criticism is encouraged to a lesser extent. What all the children in these classrooms become accustomed to is the description of an art object in terms of its properties. Thus a parity of criticism and studio production is moved along, but currently without an equivalent attention to history.

What a child likes is more or less treated as unimportant. Personal preference is of course encouraged in production, but not in criticism. Discriminations in merit and

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[30]According to Broudy, the K-6 curriculum should sharpen both perception and manipulation in the major media. Knowledge about and appreciation of the arts should dominate in grades 7-12. The last three years of high school might concentrate on interpretation and criticism. ("A Common Curriculum in Aesthetics and Fine Arts," in Gary Fenstermacher and John Goodlad (eds.), *Individual Differences and the Common Curriculum*, National Society for the Study of Education, Eighty-second Yearbook, Part I, 1983, p. 240.)

[31]Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1979, ch. 11.

attractiveness are given little focus in classrooms where a degree of positive feeling is essential for learning and class control. A major issue remains to be faced when the question of "whose" standards—history's, the teacher's, the student's—comes to the fore. For the time being, perceptual scanning is taught as an objective affair, not subjective.

LONG TERM GOALS

Educators concerned about art education in Champaign and Decatur are not confused about how large is the task, or how small the opportunity. Developing a conceptual approach to art has barely begun in Champaign and is but a small step further along in Decatur. When these teachers hear about student recognition of expressive qualities in art and about enriching the images of all thinking, for all students, they are hearing about achievements far down the road. They have had their aims set high. They have been sobered by the District's inability to provide substantial impetus, disappointed by the unreadiness of most classroom teachers. But as most teachers do, they largely ignore the gap between real and ideal, and work when and where they can to move things along.

Rank and file teachers in both systems respect the place of the arts in general education but are not persuaded by (most have not heard of) Broudy's vision of general intellectual development through perceptual scanning and imaging. They see art as less essential and more postponable than most subject matters. Almost unanimously they support preparation of children through the development of study skills and operations, particularly math and reading. They define simple knowledge that all students can and should learn as hierarchically necessary for engagement of the higher mental processes.

By and large teachers believe that *tests* designed to indicate scholastic aptitude and to measure attained-competence *are* targeted on knowledge and skills that all children should command. Few are troubled that it might be a disservice to many to spend an enormous amount of time getting all learners "proficient." All too absent is the desire to be working through complex problems. Many denigrate situations in which for the moment most children will recognize only something about the problem faced and the concern given it. Only socialization and objectives manifested in test items are treated by most teachers as having high priority.

This emphasis on "basics" and testing, and the consequent diminishment of art education, are closely related to cutbacks in general funding for education. Realization of the magnitude of property taxes and other support for education coupled with dismay at youth unemployment and illiteracy caused many parents and other taxpayers to protest. They know that schools cannot remedy all social ills. They are wise to the fact that today's education is not the positive force it was expected to be. They suspect—and teachers agree—that not enough class time has been spent on the right things. The "right" things include spelling and math, but not art and values clarification.

Reduced enrollments and opposition to new taxes meant fewer funds for the schools, and specialists in music and art were among the first to go, treated almost as peripheral luxuries. The regular classroom teachers might of course include some teaching of art as relief from the daily grind. Art was seen as an important edge to life, but the center had to be worked on first. Columbia Magnet School and Centennial Laboratory School were examples of what someday might be done for all, but now is done primarily for children whose parents press to get them in. A certain elitism was noted, in spite of the obvious role of the arts in equity of educational opportunity.